

NARRATIVE MODELS OF UKRAINIAN REALISM: PANAS MYRNYI AND THE TOPOS OF PROSTITUTION

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1. THEMES AND MOTIFS

Compared with the preceding era of Romanticism, Ukrainian literary realism substantially expanded the repertoire of its narrative possibilities. Shedding populist poetic stereotypes with their traditional similes and verbal clichés (particularly at the time of plot transitions or pauses in the narrative that focus on portraiture or landscape), Ukrainian literature was gradually developing a manner of “objective” narration, whose main distinctive feature lay in the creation of what Roland Barthes has called “the reality effect,”¹ namely, the representation of objects of a work’s discursive realm that may have no connection to the unfolding of the event structure of the fictional world; while generation, however, an illusion of reality of events and characters. This narrative specificity of a realist work was closely tied to its ideological intent: to represent events within a system of causal linkages, grounding the movement of a character in his or her social, psychological (and often genetic hereditary) dependency.

Thematically such a text was determined, on the one hand, by the legacy of narrative models of Romantic literature. (For instance, the theme of the fallen women *pokrytka*, actualized by the Romantic Shevchenko, continued its successful existence in the works of realist prose writers, and even with later modifications in Modernist writing, for example in the early works of Vynnychenko.) On the other hand, the thematic thesaurus of realism was dictated by the non-fictional variables of external life, for representation of so-called “real” events offered the best answer to this style’s principal realistic orientation.

The thematic contours of a realist text were concretized through a series of key motifs, such as: family, money, popular rebellion, the seduced maiden, the intelligentsia’s service to the people, the destruction of patriarchal daily life, criminality, Rastignac-like career-rise—thereby creating a distinct motif structure. In the Ukrainian realist novel the motifs of popular uprisings and of the seduced maiden came to dominate, becoming, as it were, topoi of rebellion and prostitution, as evidenced by the writings of the two central figures of Ukrainian realism: Ivan-Nechui-Levyts’kyi in his *Mykola Dzheria* and *Burlachka*, and Panas Myrnyi in *Khliba revut’ voly iak iasla povni* and *Poviiia*, each pair forming a kind of gendered dyptych.

In Ukrainian literature before realism, the topos of prostitution, which is our subject here, was almost undeveloped. Even in Nechui-Levyts’kyi’s *Burlachka* Vasylyna finishes her life as a *poviiia*, only very cursorily articulated, in a legal and happy marriage, counter to the readers’ expectations. Therefore it is important to note that the narrative repertory we encounter in Panas Myrnyi he developed at the same time as Europe’s and Russia’s best authors, such as Zola, Maupassant, and Tolstoy; sometimes Myrnyi even outpaced them. For instance, his novel *Poviiia* was conceived in 1878, and its first version was completed in 1882. By comparison, Zola’s novel *Nana* was published in 1880, Maupassant’s short story collection *Mademoiselle Fifi* in 1883, and Tolstoy began his work on *The Resurrection* only in 1889. Note the statement by Ivan Bilyk, Myrnyi’s brother, critic and co-author, in a letter to Myrnyi:

Ты, повторяю, в малороссийской литературе явление новое—не по приемам, а по мотивам. У тебя социальные мотивы, которых дондеже мы не хотели и не умели изображать. Пыльчиков не ошибается: у тебя вкус французский...²

It is worth remarking that the theme of prostitution in its many different variants became the leitmotif of almost all of Myrnyi’s œuvre. Let us recall that the first prose work of the then only twenty-three-year-old writer was the story “Lykhyi poputav” about the young *pokrytka* named Varka who drowns her baby; then came the story “P’ianytsia” about the young woman Natalia who is seduced by the *panych* Ivan Mykytovych and later becomes a drunkard, a flea market trader, and a *poviiia*. In the story “Lykho davnie i s’ohochasne” the peasant woman Maryna sells her daughter Kylyna to a *panych*. In the novel *Khliba revut’ voly iak iasla povni* the prostitution topos is actualized in the subplot of Maksym Hudz’ and his wife moskalykha Iavdoshka. Chipka’s mother-in-law, and a former drunkard and *poviiia*. This topos reappears with an unexpected twist in the story “Lovy,” where a gendarme, having married an *instytutka*, conducts a police raid at a hotel frequented by prostitutes and finds in one of the rooms his young wife. Finally, in the novel *Poviiia*, which Myrnyi reworked continuously through his entire creative career, this topos is represented in its fullest form. In a letter to Mykhailo Staryts’kyi dated 15 November 1881 the author wrote the following about the central concept of his work:

Головна ідея моєї праці—виставити пролетаріатку і проститутку сьогочасну, її побут в селі (перша частина), в місті (друга), на слизькому шляху (третя) і попідтинню (четверта). Гуртом усю працю я назвав *Повіа*. Цією назвою народ охрестив без пристановища тиняючих людей, а найбільше усього проститутток.³

The prostitute, occupying society’s lowest stratum and satisfying for pay the “true,” that is, the physical needs of its members, serves as ready-made material that sheds light on the deep “reality” of life and therefore serves as an ideal subject for depiction in a realist work.⁴ Mykhailo Rudnyts’kyi noted that

реаліст хоче передати вражіння „дійсности” тим, що змалювуватиме зовсім сірих людей серед найзвичайніших обставин. Усі ті, хто досі не знали чести, щоб називатися героями, стануть ними автоматично – члени найнижчої суспільної верстви.⁵

The general contours of the narrative about the prostitute in Ukrainian realist literature were shaped by a tendency towards *compassion* for the wronged (seduced and abandoned) young woman, developed already by the Sentimentalists and the Romantics (Kvitka, Vovchok, Shevchenko). All the stories of unhappy love (such as Kvitka's *Marusia* and Shevchenko's "Kateryna") or about the landowner who rapes a serf girl (as in Marko Vovchok's "Odarka") are forerunners of the prostitute plot: while the Romantic convention cautioned the heroine against moral downfall, the Realist one, on the contrary, foresaw it. Thus, while Odarka, raped by her master in Marko Vovchok's story, cannot endure the torment in her conscience and soon dies from shock, the tempted Khrystia in Panas Myrnyi's work continues her downward spiral to moral and physical catastrophe, passing through all the stages of a *poviiia*'s life.

This thematic point itself highlights the difference in the way the theme of prostitution is conceptualized in Ukrainian and other European literatures. Thus, for example, in French literature (in the first instance in Maupassant) the prostitute's story tends to elicit *recognition*, rather than *compassion*, as evidenced by one of the principal plot patterns (along with that of "seduction") which is constructed as a meeting between a writer (or another thinking subject) and a prostitute and hearing her life story. An excellent example of this type can be found in Maupassant's short story "Odyssey of a Prostitute." At the same time, in Russian literature the dominant intent was directed at the *salvation* of the woman (Dostoevsky, Tolstoy). Count Nekhludov in *The Resurrection*, meeting a few years after the seduction Katiusha Maslova, now sentenced to hard labor, experiences pangs of conscience and joins her (even against her will) on the road to Siberia, hoping thereby to help her and to atone for his sin.

2. NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

The character level of the prostitute narrative is represented by several actant roles.⁶ Thus the hero, frequently present in Russian and French texts (a lonely intelligentsia man: a student, a revolutionary, a journalist, a writer, an artist) occupies in relation to the prostitute a position of generosity, as her well-wisher. He either sympathizes with her and studies her (like Maupassant's writer-heroes), or tries to save her (like Tolstoy's Nekhludov). But in Myrnyi's *Poviiia* this role is absent. A pale suggestion of a hero of this type can be found only in "P'ianytsia," where the *panych* Ivan Mykytovych offers marriage to Natalia, who had been seduced by his brother Petro; however, while genuinely moved, she refuses. The absence of the role of the hero in Myrnyi can be explained by the specific construction of the narrative point of view. For if in the works of French and Russian realists the narration is presented from a point of view proximate to the hero, or from the point of view of the prostitute herself (but only as a narrative within a narrative), in Myrnyi's novel the story of the *poviiia* Khrystia is presented from a point of view that in the "plane of judgment," to use Boris Uspensky's terminology,⁷ is close to the position of the heroine.

The actant role of the heroine is usually realized either by a professional prostitute who works in a bordello or walks the streets, or the *cocotte* or kept woman (as in Zola's novel *Nana*). Her age, beauty and moral qualities can fluctuate in the extreme, although more often than not she is a beautiful young woman with a good heart. In the story of Khrystia Prytyka Myrnyi introduced almost all the basic plot devices used by writers in creating the typical story of a girl's decline: seduction, being passed from one man to another, boarding with a kind older man (Kolishnyk), his death, and the final transformation of the heroine into a "fallen woman."

While an antihero is a feature in few plots of European realist narratives about prostitutes, in *Poviiia* he performs several specific functions, the main one being the initial seduction of the heroine (Hryhorii Protsenko). The anti-heroine (who figures in realist plots far less frequently than the antihero) is also present in Myrnyi's novel: it is Khrystia's friend, the prostitute Maryna, who is distinguished from the heroine by her cynicism. The prostitution topos in realist literature was developed as a means for analyzing the contradictions of social morality, although this realist goal was reached which the help of Romantic techniques of doubling and contrast, creating such obvious binaries as hero/antihero, heroine/anti-heroine, as well as heroine (prostitute)/antihero (client).⁸ Thus Maryna, after marrying the *panych* Dovbnia, leaves him of her own volition to return to prostitution.

3. INITIATION

For all the frankness and openness in stories about prostitutes, the sex act itself, as a rule, is not represented in any way, although, naturally, it is implied. Here one can single out such stages in sexual relations as the "first seduction" of the heroine, sexual intimacy with a series of more or less individualized clients, commercial sex, and sympathy or even love for a client. The heroine's sexual initiation that was normally supposed to take place within marriage, takes the form of seduction, thereby casting the heroine out of "polite society" and forcing her into the role of prostitute. The heroine appropriates the mentality characteristic of this role, a mentality imposed upon her by society and her clients.⁹ Here one must touch at least briefly upon the question of semioticization of artistic space in the process of conceptualization of the prostitution topos in the Ukrainian realist novel. The basic underlying opposition here is the binary "country versus city." For every girl living in a village was under the constant control of the community (*hromada*) which regimented the sexual behavior of its members. Thus, a maiden had no moral right to meet a male youth during the day or talk to him in the presence of other villagers, but she had the right (and in a certain sense was required) to attend evening gatherings (*vechornytsi*, *dosvitky*), gaining there her first sexual experiences, which had to be limited to kisses, caresses, and spending the night together. This enabled girls to enter marriages as virgins. Repressive measures that followed violation of these norms included vile rumors (*pohani chutky*, *nedobryi poholos*) which led to the girl being shunned by the community, as well as various physical manipulations and rituals. In *Poviiia* Myrnyi presents the story of a girl who lost her virginity before marriage, as narrated in the novel by *baba* Oryshka. In punishment the girl had her hair shorn, and was then tarred and feathered and paraded naked through the village.¹⁰ It is important to note that in passing the boundary from country to city for a girl meant leaving the semiotic space of the country and an implicit marking of her in the village as a *poviiia*. For the community, whom the novel characterized as hundred-eyed bunch of people ("stooka kupa liudei"), thereby loses control over the girl and the accompanying repressive functions. The former villager, Khrystia's friend Maryna, in a relationship with the *panych* Dovbnia and even planning to marry him, remarks,

„Я тепер одрізана скиба од хліба! А в село я не піду. Чого я там не бачила? Щоб кожне на тебе пальцем тикало? Очі вибивало? Не тільки світу, що в вікні—за вікном його більше!..”¹¹

By way of contrast, a country girl just arrived in the city seeking work is automatically viewed by city dwellers as honest and decent: „Девка как есть девка—настоящая! Не наших городских шлюх,” the landowner Seleznev says about Khrystia. The *Panych* Dovbnya thinks the same in his admiration of Khrystia:

„Оце так! Оце смак! Це не городська... хльорка, не панянка, що у їх жилах замість крові тече буряковий квас або сирівець. Ця—запечена сонцем; у сеї кров—огонь”¹²

In contrast to other authors, Myrnyi describes the heroine's first sexual experience in detail. While Zola and Tolstoy as a rule present the heroine's seduction in a summary flashback, merely stating the fact, Myrnyi devotes sixty pages of text to it, presenting all the stages of the process: from the heroine's first erotic feelings to the moment when she is thrown out of her master's house for her erotic liaison with the *panych*. This extended treatment, it seems, was meant to emphasize the sincerity of Khrystia's feelings, her purity and naïveté. The description of the heroine's physiological erotic reactions to the *panych*'s caresses is dominated by plant phraseology that emphasizes the natural and unconscious aspect of the sensations:

рука паничева якось гіє, лоскоче; Христя червона, як маківка, схилила голову на один бік і придавила підборіддям його руку до своєї шиї. Вона почула, як її серце забилося, як дух у грудях затнувся, високо піднімаючи повне огню лоно... у Христі ж очі горіли-палали... Дух у грудях ще дужче сперло, кров ще більше вдарилася в лице, аж в ушах шуміло.¹³

The same botanical vocabulary can be noted at the moment when Khrystia for the first time views herself in a mirror:

...вона здавалася не польовою квіткою довгостеблом, от як Марина, а повною огородною маргариткою, що так широко ходили коло неї невтомні дівочі руки, доглядали невсипущі очі, кожну бур'янину прополюючи, рано й вечір поливаючи... Білі вишиті рукава випадали з темної корсетки, мов пучок квіток, нав'язаний на руки; корсетка чорніла, а ситцева спідниця червоніла незчисленними квіточками, мов поляна серед лісу, густо укрита трав'янками¹⁴.

It may be noted that Nechui-Levyts'kyi uses similar phraseology in his description of Vasylyna's contemplation of herself in the mirror in “Burlachka,” as Tamara Hundorova has remarked in her essay “Zhinka i dzerkalo.”¹⁵

In Myrnyi's novel the heroine's sexual initiation first takes the form of voyeurism, when Khrystia spies on the amorous liaison between the *panych* and his *kuma*, a much older woman named Pystyna Ivanivna:

«Що ж се ж воно буде?» — подумала Христя і підвела голову. Двері були не причинені, щілина завширшки з долоню давала на все вільно дивитись. «Невже і вона?..»... Мороз наче пройшов вдовж Христині спini... «У неї ж чоловік... У неї двійко дітей... Вона — кума його!» — думала Христя і чогось сама себе боялася¹⁶

Later Khrystia, having fallen in love with Protsenko, allows him to kiss her from time to time, and then learns from her friend Maryna that she's going to her own *panych* “*na soderzhaniie*.” Thus the heroine undergoes as it were an informational initiation into being a *povii*, compares her maidenly sexual experience with that of her friend, and only then gives herself to Protsenko. It is worth noting that the heroine perceives this initiation, this sexual liaison with a person from a higher social stratum, as a change in her own social rank. The heroine hears from the servant Mar'ia that many young society women chase after Protsenko, even the priest's wife—but he chooses her, Khrystia. This flatters the heroine and allows her to think of herself as a *panianka*:

„Невже він... він, панич, що за ним ганяються панянки з усього міста, — мене любить?.. Невже та попадає, що, кажуть, як картина хороша, не подобалась йому? А я... я — проста дівка? — йому подобалась?.. Оце дивно!”¹⁷

4. PROSTITUTION AND FAMILY

If marriage is normally considered the natural setting for a woman's sexual initiation, it is understandable that the conceptualization of the prostitution topos cannot avoid the family-related aspect of the plot. In some cases we observe prostitution itself being granted familial features, in others—there is a plot collision between family and prostitution. A characteristic Russian variant of this superimposition of prostitution onto the family is the motif of “introduction of the prostitute into the home with the rights of a wife,” represented through such clichés as the fake marriage, and even on the level of small details, such as “having tea together.” We find analogous situations in Myrnyi as well. Already Khrystia's first master, Ulas Zahnybida, tempted by her youth and beauty, implores her in the middle of the night:

„А от що я тобі скажу... Хочеш бути багачкою, ходи у шовках, у золоті? [...] Ти бачила оту здохляку? — ткнувши пальцем на кімнату, спитався Загнібіда. [...] Сидка-бридка!.. А ти мені якраз під норов підійшла...”¹⁸

Later Protsenko tells Khrystia,

«Знаєш шо? Діждемо літа, я поїду у губернію, похлопочу собі переводу, візьму і тебе з собою. Тамто ми заживемо тихо та любі!»¹⁹

When Protsenko and Khrystia remain alone in the house, he indeed invites her to have tea together, which was also tied to the idea of family life, and of the heroine as the mistress of the house:

«Будемо пити чай укуні. Хоч раз побачу, як ми будемо жити колись, — сказав він... Чай посідали пити у столовій, де завжди пани п'ють; він по один бік столу, вона напроти його. Боже! яка вона щаслива! Уперше зроду вона чує рівню себе з ним, близькою до його...»²⁰

Similarly, when Khrystia, then still staying with her last master, Kolisnyk, sits alone by the samovar, her interior monologue unfolds in the same plane of tea-taking:

Сама біля самовару, над стаканом чаю, котрий, недопитий і холодний, стояв коло неї. Нащо його допивати, коли ні з ким допити?²¹

In this context the episode in the novel when the not yet seduced Khrystia for the first time serves the samovar with tea to Zahnybida (who will later try to seduce her) and having accidentally tilted it, burns her hand acquires special meaning. The metaphor is obvious: the young woman is burned precisely by family life.

It is also interesting to note that in texts about prostitutes having tea is often contrasted with drinking alcohol, contrasting metaphorically family life and prostitution. The prostitute's self-consciousness was directly tied with the clouding of the mind by alcohol. Therefore, tea and alcohol are often present at the same time, placing the heroine in the situation of symbolic choice between family life and the status of a prostitute. Thus Khrystia, falling into the hands of the gendarme Knysh, tries out both the role of housewife and prostitute, gradually leaning towards the latter. This situation is symbolically realized in the simultaneous drinking of tea and rum:

А ввечері Христя удвох з Книшем уже розпивали чаї. Пляшка рому стояла на столі. Книш раз по раз підливав з неї у свій і без того темний стакан. [...] Теплий чай, привітна розмова і гріли, і веселили її. Один раз, коли вона простягла руку до пляшки, щоб собі у чай налити, їй здалося, наче синє Колісникове лице з замуреними очима виглянуло з-за пляшки. Вона струснулася і линула рому більше, чим треба.²²

The interruption of Khrystia and Protsenko (with whom she is already in love) drinking tea together (here, symbolic of family life) by the unexpected arrival of the drunken Dovbnya, Protsenko's friend, thus also acquires symbolic meaning.

Khrystia's intrusion into someone else's family often destroys the latter: thus because of her, Zahnybida kills his wife Olena, and Kolisnyk, tormented by the thought of the necessity of leaving Khrystia at least briefly to see his wife, soon commits suicide. Something similar, by the way, befalls Zola's Nana: she leads to ruin or corruption the families she comes in touch with—everything ends with either the loss of social prestige, or financial ruin, or death.

The family aspect of the plot is also tied to the heroine's periodic reflections on her own fate as a *poviiia* and even the word's etymology and meaning, considered an antonym of *berehynia*, the mistress protecting the house:

Почувалося — нема їй місця такого, немає кутка нагрітого! Повія... Повія... як вітер віється по полю, як птиця носиться по вітру, так вона по білому світу.²³

Or:

«Немає нічого рідного, до чого б я прихилилась, що б мене привітало, гріло. Немає того, про що б я сказала: оце моє і ніхто його не одніме від мене. Все чуже, і я чужа. Як та безпарна птиця, ношуся від деревини до деревини, від гілки до гілки, де б зобачити чуже гніздо і пересидіти в йому ніч темну»²⁴

Although within the paradigm of the family the prostitute is frequently put in an analogous place with the wife, she is also quite often compared to a child and given infantile features. Writers themselves have given as a reason for this the observation that a prostitute's psychological development is often arrested at the time of her first seduction.²⁵ Myrnyi manages to sustain through the end of the novel the reader's impression of Khrystia's infantile nature and the tone of purity and innocence with which the novel had opened. This is achieved primarily by means of the interior monologue of the character in question and through indirect free speech, as well as through the narrative's *fabula*. Thus, Khrystia's childlike quality is emphasized by the situations when she is overcome with joy, "like a child," upon receiving the new boots bought for her in the city by her father, while the father himself was found dead on his way home. It is also implied by the episode when visiting her ailing mother she does not stay with her for the evening, but runs with her girlfriends to spy on the boys. In Myrnyi's text, the prostitutes (Khrystia, Mar'ia, Maryna) are frequently compared to children in moments of tears, despair, play, or joy. Their male clients carry them in their arms and hold them "like babies"; Khrystia calls Kolisnyk her daddy: (*papasha*, *tatus'*, *tatochko*).

Narratives about prostitutes also underscore the tragic contradiction between prostitution and motherhood. Examples of this conflict can be found already in the Romantic plots about *pokrytky*, and later in realist stories about abandoned women killing their own children (Varka in Myrnyi's "Lykhyi poputav," Vasylina in Nechui-Levyts'kyi's "Burlachka"). One also finds instances of abortion (as in Marta's unintentional abortion in *Poviiia*), neglect, and frequently death of the child (Tolstoy's *Resurrection*, Zola's *Nana*).

5. MONEY

If prostitution is love for sale, then it is understandable that money acquires a wide range of functions in the text and is conceptualized on several levels. In narratives about prostitutes an episode of a prostitute refusing money often acquires special importance, as does an offer of sex for free or a request that the pimp or the client safeguard her money at his own place.²⁶ Money acquires a symbolic and ritual dimension, and comes to correlate with other realia that acquire such a symbolic dimension.

On the level of composition money plays the role of the plot's main driving "spring" in Myrnyi's novel.²⁷ Khrystia Prytyka's path to the city begins with the five rubles taken from the dead Pylyp Prytyka by Hryts'ko Suprunenko, and which the young woman has to repay through work. Khrystia's first arrest also takes place because of money, namely, a large bank note Zahnybida gave her to buy her silence (in a state of excitement, Zahnybida, filled with desire for the lovely Khrystia, kills his aged wife, with Khrystia as witness). Khrystia's last "sugar daddy," Kolisnyk, meets his death because of embezzlement of the *zemstvo* treasury; after this, she becomes a streetwalker. Even at the closing of the novel, over the already dead Khrystia, the peasants talk about money.

The ritual function of money is conceptualized in the novel both on the level of action and of symbol. First of all, the opposition between the country and the city is actualized again. In this instance it is interpreted not in the aspect of morality/immorality, but of hard work vs. commercialism, creating an opposition between the commercialized city and the hard-working village. Thus, Khrystia's friend Maryna (the novel's anti-heroine), in answering the question if she liked the city, uses a "financial" simile:

„Мені? Коли б хто давав сотню рублів і сказав: кидай, Марино, *город* та йди знову у *село*—не пішла б! І не піду... Ніколи! ніколи!»—граючи очима і усміхаючись рожевими устами, торохтіла Марина²⁸

As we can see, even the actional code of her behavior during the answer reminds the reader of features characteristic of *cocottes* or prostitutes (in her eyes and mouth). Similarly, at the end of the novel one of the characters makes the following statement over Khrystia's dead body, „У селі робота, а у *городі*—комерція.”²⁹ Khrystia and Mar'ia, in

contrast to from Maryna, leave their money with their “sugar daddies” for safekeeping, trusting them—which is supposed to connote the selflessness of their love and their unspoiled consciousness.

If money in the novel becomes the universal symbol of commercialization of human relations, a local symbol of this kind in Myrnyi's novel is embodied by the image of the Jew. It must be noted at the outset that Myrnyi interprets this image not on the level of nationality or ethnicity, or religion; it is only the social role of a shopkeeper and a tavern keeper. An example of this kind can be found in a fragment of the novel in which Jews are mentioned not along with representatives of other ethnic groups, but along with other social groups in a representation of social stratification:

Не те у місті:...там оселились люди не *польової* праці — гречкосії та хлібороби, а *городської* — ремісники, купці, крамарі, пани — воєнні й невоєнні, служачі й не служачі, жиди — в ярмулках і без ярмулок, в дорогих саятах і в драних балахонах... Все те живе тільки на гроші, все те купує, що потрібно для життя, а не своїми руками добуває.³⁰

It is this interpretation that allowed Myrnyi to link the character of the Jew and that of the prostitute and to draw an analogy between them. Already in his novel *Khiba revut' voly iak iasla povni*, the narrative voice in the story of the prostitute Iavdoshka, Chipka's future mother-in-law, states,

Знаючи красі свій цін, вона торгувала нею, як *жид* крамом, не пропускаючи случаю зірвати найбільше.

An interesting detail: both times when Khrystia asks a Jewish man for employment (the first, when she is still in her best physical form, is as a singer and a “harpist”; the second when in her worst form sick with syphilis, is for simple menial work), she does not use her real name. Symbolically she, as it were, sells it too. In both cases Myrnyi brings the heroine into the narrative under an assumed name, creating an intrigue for the reader and forcing him to guess who this allegedly new character is and why she appears here. As a “harpist” Khrystia uses, as it were, a stage name, the classic prostitute name Natasha. And as a maidservant she is called “*rohozhka*” (“sack cloth”—because she covers her face, disfigured by syphilis, with a cloth). Myrnyi even brings Jews into the last moment of Khrystia's life: having lost her beauty, health, and savings in the city, the heroine decides to return to the village, and having arrived freezes to death next to her parents' house, now sold to a Jewish man who runs a tavern.³¹

6. PROSTITUTION AND VIOLENCE

A peculiar thematization in the texts about prostitution is given to strategies of power and the violence associated it both physical and moral. The simple form of physical violence is beating. Prostitutes are beaten in Maupassant's “Mademoiselle Fifi,” in Zola's *Nana*, in the works of many Russian authors (Kuprin's *Pit*, Gorky's “Once in the Fall,” etc.). In Myrnyi's novel Mar'ia suffers a cruel beating by a *moskal'*. The most extreme form of violence is murder (Zahnybida because of Khrystia kills his own wife) and suicide (Khrystia's lover Kolisnyk, unwilling, after embezzling the *zemstvo* treasury, to let the case reach the courts, kills himself). But much more prevalent in the text is the so-called “legal” violence, exercised upon the blameless prostitute by the state mechanisms of the courts, the police and organs of power more generally. Thus it is through the *volost'* that Khrystia's mother is informed that the girl must go into employment at Ulas Zahnybida's; it is from the *volost'* that people come to find out why poor Khrystia is in possession of a fifty-ruble note. After Kolisnyk's suicide Khrystia is taken to the police office, where the gendarme Knysh, using the weight of his position, forces her to have sex (she even does a strip show for him) as a payment for setting her free. Every criminal or financial threat experienced by the heroine forces her to pay with her own body, the only universal currency in the world where power is in the hands of men.

7. PROSTITUTION AND REALISM

One manifestation of “documentary” intent in plots concerning prostitutes is their presentation of the heroine's “true story”. The content itself, full of details on the harshness of life, the circumstances of narration (the telling of the story to a writer, a reporter, a policeman—representatives of an objective point of view), work in favor of the reality effect.³² A classical example can be found in Maupassant's story “Odyssey of a Prostitute”: the writer-narrator saves a prostitute from the police, and she tells him her story: the seduction, the road to the city, her wanderings. Her first decent client suddenly dies at a restaurant over dessert, and she is charged with murder. A similar situation can be found in Franko's story “Soichyne krylo.” There a woman tells her life story of a prostitute in the form of a letter, from which the hero learns about all her men. Panas Myrnyi uses a peculiar form of representing the realness and truthfulness of the story, namely, the telling of it by a woman to a woman. This case is notable, since the prostitute's story about her downfall, which forms the very core of this topos, is usually presented to a male client who looks in this story for erotic stimulation and desires to take advantage of the heroine morally.³³ A prostitute usually invents a cliché story, especially about the moments connected to her first downfall. By contrast, Khrystia does not tell any of the characters anything about her life. One can guess why: Myrnyi, to maintain the realist conventions, would have had to force the heroine to lie, and therefore reconcile herself to being a prostitute—whereas Khrystia, although she frequently thinks of herself as a woman without a stable home, internally does not accept this role. At one point she, having spied on the amorous play of Protzenko and Pystyna Ivanivna, looks for a pretext to recount this to her older friend “Mar'ia,” and having related it, herself becomes a listener of a story of downfall told to her by Mar'ia herself. In the novel this story has a prospective function, for in a summary form it sketches for the reader Khrystia's own fate, which would follow a similar path.

8. CONCLUSION

The conceptualization of the prostitution topos in Panas Myrnyi's work cannot be unlinked from the stereotype of the suffering woman, inherited by Ukrainian realism from the previous era and the works of Shevchenko and Marko Vovchok. Franko gradually rids himself of this stereotype (see his “*Diia domashn'oho ohnyshcha*”³⁴), and Vynnychenko ironizes and thereby destroys it.³⁵ In the era of realism the prostitute becomes a peculiar mirror of the process of modernization of the Ukrainian nation, the proletarianization of the peasantry, and the capitalization of daily life. She found herself at the crossroads of limits and boundaries: spatial (between the city and the country); temporal (between serfdom and hired labor); social (the

formation of a new social stratification); and cultural. Due to her liminal status, the prostitute becomes the ideal object for representation by a realist.

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2. Panas Myrnyi, *Zibrann'a tvoriv u 7 tt., t. 2* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1969), P. 384.
3. *Ibid.*, t. 7, P. 359.
4. Alexander Zholkovsky, Mikhail Iamploski [sic], *Babel'/Babel* (Moscow: Carte Blanche, 1994).
5. М. Рудницький, *Від Мирного до Хвильового*, с. 114.
6. Zholkovsky, Iamploski, *op. cit.* - P. 324.
7. Б. Успенский, *Поэтика композиции: Структура художественного текста и типология композиционной формы* (М.: Искусство, 1970), с. 16.
8. Zholkovsky and Iamploski, *op. cit.* - P. 334.
9. *Ibid.* - P. 356.
10. Панас Мирний, *Повія*, in *Мирний, Зібрання творів у 7 тт., т. 3* (К.: Наукова думка, 1969), с. 421.
11. Там само. – 286.
12. Там само. – С. 251.
13. Там само. – С. 226.
14. Там само. – С. 227.
15. «І». – Ч. 7. – 2000. Poviia contains one more episode when Khrystia admires her reflection, this time looking into a water-filled pit; however, thoughts of men cloud her self-perception, pointing to the problem of gender power: «У ковбаныці, кругом оторочений зеленою травою, мов у дзеркалі з зеленою оздобою, знову показалося молоде личко, чорнії коси, завітчані фіалками та трав'янками, як віночок, облягали біле, наче з мармуру, чоло. Ніс прямий, на кінці трохи угору піднявся, щічки повні, злегка рожеві, уста пухлі та червоні, трохи розкриті, і з їх невеличкої щілини виглядають дрібні білі зубочки. "То се ж я, я!" — скрикнула Христя і усміхнулась сама до себе. Личко, що в воді, собі усміхнулось. Та яка ж то привітна та втішна ухмилка! Зубенята ще більше блиснули, а очі Загнали, мов зорі, у їх непрозорій темноті зажеврили іскорки невеличкі. Христя замилювалась сама на себе. Вона вперше підгляділа свою красу пишну, уперше серцем прочула свою вроду незвичайну. Досі скільки раз їй приходилось заглядати у дзеркало, і вона того нічого не примічала, а тепер щось любе, невимовне любе та втішне обізвалось у її серці... «Недаром же вони так гоняться за мною! і старий одутлий Колісник задивляється на неї!» — подумала вона, удивляючись все прикріше та прикріше у те обличчя, що стиха тремтіло на чорному лоні води. «Що ж мені із цього? Другим — утіха, Забавка, а мені?» Неясна хвиля туги прилила у душу, болісно ущипнувши за серце. Потухли іскорки ув очях, пропала ухмилка весела, замість неї непримітна тінь нерадісної думки обняла все обличчя. Сумно визирало воно з води на неї своїми темними очима» [с. 439].
16. Мирний Панас. *Повія* //Панас Мирний. *Зібрання творів у 7 тт.* – Т. 3. – К.: Наукова думка, 1969. – С. 198.
17. Там само. - С. 276.
18. Там само. - С. 120.
19. Там само. - С. 307.
20. Там само. - С. 308.
21. Там само. - С. 425.
22. Там само. - С. 479.
23. Там само. - С. 426.
24. Там само. - С. 445.
25. Such is the opinion put for, for instance, by Vsevolod Garshin in his story "An Accident."
26. Zholkovsky and Iamploski, *op. cit.* - P. 380.
27. See Черкаський В.М. *Художній світ Панаса Мирного*. – К.: Дніпро, 1989. – С. 65.
28. Мирний Панас. *Повія* //Панас Мирний. *Зібрання творів у 7 тт.* – Т. 3. – К.: Наукова думка, 1969. - С. 221.
29. Там само. – С. 517.
30. Мирний Панас. *Повія* //Панас Мирний. *Зібрання творів у 7 тт.* – Т. 3. – К.: Наукова думка, 1969. - С. 175.
31. The introduction of the image of a Jew in the prostitution topos (and based on Ukrainian material, as it is set in Kyiv) can also be observed in Aleksandr Kuprin's novel *The Pit*, in the character of the pimp Gorizont.
32. Zholkovsky and Iamploski, *op. cit.*
33. *Ibid.* - P. 380.
34. Captain Anharovych's wife, who supplied prostitutes to bordellos in Constantinople and Alexandria, turns out to be a strong person and even capable of killing herself, in difference from her husband.
35. Volodymyr Panchenko notes, "Якщо Софія у "Повії" - це спокушена й кинута паничем дівчина, то Галя з оповідання "Народний діяч" (1903 р.) сама обирає свою долю, свідомо продаючи красу. Вродлива й розумна сільська дівчина, вона вирушає в місто, де стає шансонеткою. Але Галя не виглядає жертвою, як героїня Панаса Мирного чи та ж Винниченкова Софія! Як і "народний діяч" Вася Головатий, якого вона колись любила, Галя знайшла свою "нішу" і, здається, цілком задоволена нею» / Див.: Панченко В. *Творчість Володимира Винниченка 1902-1920 рр. у генетичних і типологічних зв'язках з європейськими літературами*. – К., 1998.